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BOOK REVIEWS

The Danish West Indies under Company Rule (1671-1754).

By Waldemar Westergaard, Ph.D. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917. Pp. xxiv+359.

History, more than the Constitution, may be said to follow the flag. Historical investigation in the United States has kept pace with the expansion of American interests and the extension of American sovereignty in the Caribbean and Gulf regions. And it was very satisfying to see, within a year of our purchase of the Danish West Indies, an historical study of these islands from the pen of an American scholar.

In a sense the islands find their first historian in the author of the present volume. Not even Danish historians have attempted a thorough investigation of the sources of Danish colonial history. Excellent biographies of two of the governors of St. Thomas and some studies of special topics are found, but nothing like a complete, scientific treatment based on primary sources. And what Danish scholars, with the materials at hand, neglected, English-speaking students can be pardoned for overlooking. The English literature on our new possessions was made up practically of the work of John P. Knox written sixty years ago, and of which the meritorious portions are faulty translations from the Danish, a book by Charles Edward Taylor published in 1888, which represents the use of some archival material, Appleton Griffin's list of works in the library of Congress, which is the only special bibliography on the subject, the document prepared for Congress in 1902, and some chapters in general works on Danish and West Indian history. In view of these facts Dr. Westergaard is almost a pioneer. Even L. K. Zabriskie's *The Virgin Islands of the United States of America*, which appeared last year, does not compare as history with the work here under review.

The Danish West India Company under Company Rule grew out of the author's examination of some important documents for this subject in the Bancroft Library at the University of California. The insufficiency of printed materials led the author to Denmark where the State Archives, the Royal Library and the

Municipal Archives in Copenhagen yielded a wealth of manuscript sources. These, with the printed sources and the secondary literature, were gone through, and the results are to be embodied in three books. The first of these, which we now have, covers the period of company rule. The second will continue the history to the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The third will conclude with the present time. This first volume, originally a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of California, is supplemented by a summary of the period from 1754-1915 to meet the interest aroused by the purchase of the islands.

The Danish experiment in the West Indies is a small part of the great colonial and commercial expansion of Europe. When the English, the French, and the Dutch were making enormous inroads into the Portuguese monopoly in the East and the Spanish monopoly in the West, Denmark was in no position to play any important rôle. The prowess of the Viking Age was a tradition which had no promise of renewal. During the years when Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were held together by the Union of Kolmar, plans for American exploration had been made, but without any result. Then the separation of Sweden, political crises, religious troubles resulting from the Reformation, and economic decline reduced Danish resources to a low level. Again the promise that lay in the movements pushed by the enterprising king, Christian IV, in the early years of the seventeenth century was frustrated. Voyages were made to Greenland and Hudson Bay, companies were formed for trade with Iceland, France, and Spain, a Danish East India Company was established, and a Danish West India Company was proposed. But the king's failure in the German religious wars reacted on commercial conditions at home, and the results of these hopeful beginnings were meagre. Finally, when the *coup d'état* of Frederick III, in 1660, had given Denmark an efficient absolute monarchy, government leadership of trade and an era of peace and advantageous diplomacy made it possible for Denmark to enter the West Indies. Danish ships privately owned had already sailed to West Indian waters but now there came an opportunity to colonize. The island of St. Thomas, with an excellent harbor, was unoccupied; the relations of Denmark to the other powers would allow the Danes to retain it; and the

active support of the home government would make the plan feasible. Accordingly the Danish West India Company was established, and in the same year the settlers arrived at St. Thomas. In 1683, the neighboring island of St. John was claimed, and settled in 1717. In 1733, St. Croix was purchased from the French. In 1754, company rule ended and the Crown assumed direct control until 1916.

The history of these islands under company rule has a three-fold interest. American colonial history is a part of European history, which it constantly reflects and by which it was always determined. The similarity of chartered companies in colonial history makes a study of the Danish Company very helpful in understanding the others, and the economic solidarity of the West Indies causes the history of any portion of them to be typical of general conditions. Hence this account of the workings of the Danish Company, of the administration of the colony, of its relations to Europe and to its neighbors, and of its commercial concerns presents a valuable cross-section of universal history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is to be noted that Dr. Westergaard's treatment takes advantage of these large possibilities of his subject.

It is not within the purpose of this review to recount the contents of the book. The reader is recommended to learn them directly. The islands are described. The fortunes of the colony are set forth chronologically through six chapters, and whatever of European history affects the islands is introduced. Then follow accounts of the slave trade, the relations of slave and planter, and of the latter to the company. These chapters (vii, viii, ix) are, perhaps, the most interesting part of the work. The last chapters deal with the acquisition of St. Croix and the final years of company rule. West Indian life is shown from every angle, economic, political, social, and religious. The economic interest, of course, dominates. The *raison d'être* of the colony was economic. One moves for the most part among planters, slaves, traders, factors, and questions of production and distribution. These are really the significant things of the book. But there is nothing of "the dismal science" about it. Things that might be caviare to the general reader—statistics of sugar and cotton, lists of exports, prices, slave cargoes and the like—

are wisely put in the appendix. The political questions are suggestive by reason of the fact that they are concerned with movements for self-government among the planters. For social history one meets slave conditions, the theater, the tavern, the newspaper. The religious world of the colonists comes in for some slight mention, the most interesting references being to mission work among the blacks and some religious statistics.

Dr. Westergaard writes most engagingly. He has enlivened his narrative with portraits of striking individuals and dramatic episodes. The figures in his portrait gallery range from Captain Kidd and the Hohenzollern Great Elector—both of whom had relation with this colony—to mutinous blacks. And if we insist rather on the readable character of the book than on its prime value as history, the reason is that the latter merit, too obvious for comment, has been recognized since the book appeared. The eagerness with which the two promised sequels are awaited is an all-sufficient praise.

The work is well documented, has a good index, and the best available bibliography on the subject. The nine maps and four illustrations are well chosen and well reproduced. The format of the book leaves nothing to be desired. The late Prof. Henry Morse Stephens, of the University of California, contributed an introduction "to set forth the results of Dr. Westergaard's labors as bearing upon the general history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."

J. M. EGAN, S.T.L.

Ten Years near the German Frontier. By Maurice Francis Egan, former United States Minister to Denmark. New York: George H. Doran Company. 1919. Price, \$3 net.

In many respects memoirs are perhaps the most fascinating department of letters, combining, as they do, the charm of romance (for anyone to be at all justified in publishing memoirs must at least have rubbed elbows with romance), with the realism of history, and affording that intimate glimpse of persons and personalities which appeals to the spark of curiosity in the least gossip-loving of us all and demonstrates the kinship of the world. Time was when we had no choice but to say "They do